

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4838

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EIND, ECON, MT

SUBJ: DRYDOCKS CUT LOSSES AND INCREASE WAGES

REF: VALLETTA 595

1. MICHAEL SEYCHELL, SECRETARY, METAL WORKERS UNION (GWU), ANNOUNCED AT MEETING SECTION DELEGATES OCT. 11 RELAXATION ECONOMY MEASURES IMPOSED IN DRYDOCKS LAST MARCH (SEE REFTEL). ALL INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES TO BE GIVEN MINIMUM ONE MALTA POUND PER WEEK WAGE INCREASE AND OVERTIME TO BE PAID AT PREMIUM RATES AS BEFORE MARCH LAST YEAR. NON-INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES TO RECEIVE INCREMENT, IN ALL CASES AMOUNTING TO LESS THAN ONE MALTA POUND PER WEEK. CONTRIBUTION (LEVY) DEDUCTED FROM EXECUTIVE AND SENIOR SALARIES TO BE DISCONTINUED. EXECUTIVE AND SENIOR STAFF ALSO TO RECEIVE INCREMENT.

2. DRYDOCKS CORP., METAL WORKERS SECTION, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CLERICAL AND SUPERVISORY STAFFS(GWU), AND DRYDOCKS SENIOR

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STAFF SAID IN JOINT STATEMENT RELEASED TO DELEGATES AT MEETING

THAT RELAXATION ECONOMY MEASURES MADE POSSIBLE AS RESULT PROGRESS IN YARD DURING PAST SIX MONTHS. SEYCHELL EXPLAINED LOSS FOR PAST SIX MONTHS REDUCED TO 70,000 MALTA POUNDS (ONE MALTA POUND EQUALS APPROXIMATELY 2.83 DOLLARS) COMPARED WITH LOSS TWO MILLION MALTA POUNDS DURING PAST FINANCIAL YEAR. SEYCHELL ADDED, IF COST OF LIVING INCREASE OF ONE MALTA POUND PER WEEK HAD NOT BEEN GRANTED LAST SPRING, YARD WOULD HAVE MADE PROFIT DURING PAST SIX MONTHS. JOINT GOAL IS NOW TO ELIMINATE GOVERNMENT SUBVENTIONS BY JULY 1974. SEYCHELL SAID HE EXPECTS ANOTHER COST OF LIVING WAGE INCREASE BE INCLUDED IN GOM BUDGET NEXT APRIL WHICH WOULD ALSO GO TO DRYDOCKS EMPLOYEES.

3. COMMENT: THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMPROVED WORK RULES AND WAGE AND SALARY INCREASES JUST BEFORE THE "GOM" RALLY SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW (OCT. 13), WHICH IS NOW BILLED AS A "GWU-MLP MASS MEETING," SEEMS DESIGNED TO ENSURE VERY LARGE TURNOUT. (VALLETTA 1923).

4. MINTOFF'S SUCCESSFUL TOUGH CONFRONTATION WITH DRYDOCKS WORKERS, THE SUPPORT GIVEN HIM BY GWU DESPITE WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION IN THE YARD, AND THE IMPROVED FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE YARD AND ITS EMPLOYEES ADD UP TO A SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL PLUS FOR HIM.

5. THE IMPROVEMENT AT THE YARD MAY BE A POLITICO-ECONOMIC BREAKTHROUGH FOR MINTOFF. RISING COST OF LIVING AND UNEMPLOYMENT WILL REMAIN A PROBLEM, BUT THE SUCCESS OF RECRUITMENT INTO THE PIONEER CORPS (EST. 4,300), CONTINUED RISING TOURISM, INCREASING EXPORTS, AND SOME INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION BY ESTABLISHED AND NEW FIRMS MAY PUT HIM ON THE ROAD TO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SUCCESS.

6. MUCH OF THE HEAVY WORKLOAD AT THE DRYDOCKS IS PROBABLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO MINTOFF'S SUCCESS IN SEEKING BUSINESS FROM THE LARGE NUMBER OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS DELEGATIONS WHICH HAVE VISITED MALTA DURING THE PAST YEAR.
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